

UPPER SAN PEDRO WATER DISTRICT

What Is It?



The First Step to More Local Control and Planned Water Management

In 2007, the Arizona Legislature enacted House Bill 2300, which allows for the establishment of the Upper San Pedro Water District, if approved by local voters. The goal of the Water District would be to maintain the conditions needed to sustain the Upper San Pedro River and to help meet the water supply needs and water conservation requirements for Fort Huachuca and the communities within the District.

The Legislature acted in recognition of community concerns related to the environmental, economic and health concerns of the area connected to the viability of the San Pedro River and its aquifer.

The District boundaries were set in the legislation (HB 2300) authorizing the District formation and were based on an Arizona Department of Water Resources map.

District Voters Will Decide

Registered voters within the proposed District will need to approve the formation of the District, a measure scheduled to be on the November 2010 ballot.

If the District is approved, a local seven-member Board of Directors selected by voters in the same election will manage the District. Prospective candidates can come from anywhere in the District and must have 200 qualified signatures to be eligible for the ballot.

The Area and Population Affected

The Sierra Vista Subwatershed, which is roughly the same area as the proposed Upper San Pedro Water



District, including the San Pedro River, supports a human population of about 78,970 (Water Management 2007 Report to Congress). The Subwatershed includes Fort Huachuca, unincorporated rural areas, and the cities of Sierra Vista, Huachuca City and Tombstone, and part of Bisbee.

What the District WOULD do:

- Provide local control over water management decisions.
- Take a leadership role in coordinating and assisting in water conservation projects with individuals, businesses, industries, and public and private entities in the District.

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- Assist communities in setting up programs for recharging and/or reusing wastewater, effluent and stormwater runoff.
- Actively pursue project funding from federal, state and private sources.
- Develop enhanced water conservation programs for public facilities, schools and industries.
- Review new major development and subdivision plans to address whether adequate water supply exists for the proposed development.
- Develop new water supply wells in locations that would not as directly impact the San Pedro River.

What the District SHALL NOT do, by law:

- Levy a tax unless approved by voters.
- Engage in the retail sale of water to customers.
- Require the use of a water-measuring device for any well, except as a condition in a contract agreed to by both parties.
- Impose mandatory conservation requirements on persons in the District.
- Regulate the acquisition, use or disposal of water or rights within the District.
- Exercise any right of eminent domain (property acquisition).

The public has a voice

The temporary Organizing Board has drafted plans for how to get the Water District up and running as well as what projects they would pursue that they need public input on. These plans are not final without public input. The Organizing Board is presenting the plans during public meetings in January, February and March 2010 with a second round of public meetings scheduled in April and May 2010. Feedback and information from those meetings will be used to modify the plans as needed.

Questions:

- Do you support the conservation, reuse, recharge and augmentation projects in these draft plans?
- What other projects would you prefer?
- What is the best way to finance these projects?

The Organizing Board represents a cross-section of the community: Chairman Mike Rutherford, president of Rutherford Industries (business); Vice Chairman Holly Richter, Upper San Pedro Program Director for The Nature Conservancy, based out of Palominas (conservation); Treasurer Rick Coffman (water utility); Secretary Steve Pauken, Bisbee city manager (city population below 35,000); Mike Boardman (retired military personnel or military support group); Carl Robie, director of Water Policy for Cochise County (Cochise County); John Ladd (agriculture and ranching); Mary Ann Black, Supervisor, Education Center Director Hereford Natural Resources Conservation District, (Natural Resources Conservation District); James Herrewig, Community Development Director for Sierra Vista (city population above 35,000).